

allegorical shape. What is meant by the serpent? We get no hint in the story that it is anything but an ordinary serpent; but the book of Revelation tells of "that old serpent the devil." It tells us also of a Tree of Life, which means eternal life and eternal communion with God. "Blessed are they who do His commandments, that they may have a right to the Tree of Life."

And what is the meaning of the other tree? What I have already said will suggest it at once. In some way—perhaps by forbidding them to eat of a literal tree; perhaps in some other way—the alternative of right and wrong is presented to the minds of our first parents, and they are forced to make a choice of good or evil. In the presence of this alternative, the old childlike innocence is no longer possible. They must rise into conscious right-doing, or fall into conscious wrong. They never again now can be just as they were. A new consciousness has come into their lives, the discernment of good and evil.

Now you will probably see less difficulty in the question why God did not save them from this temptation of the serpent. No human life can grow into righteousness without temptation. From the childlike innocence in which man was created he must pass into the higher condition of moral manhood. He must no longer merely do good instinctively. He must rise into the doing of good in the presence of evil; keeping his innocence unstained in the face of temptation. Alas! that this rise should be only possible at the risk of falling! But that seems the great law of the spiritual life. Gains are always won at the risk of corresponding losses; victories at the risk of corresponding defeats. Every temptation that comes to us is an illustration. It is an opportunity of gain at the risk of a loss; an opportunity of victory at the risk of defeat.

Alas! that our first parents chose the wrong! By that "disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Shame and sorrow came into their lives; and conscience, latent perhaps before, sprang into conscious existence in their wretched self-condemnation.

It has been said that if latent conscience thus sprang into conscious existence, the Fall was really a "fall upward." Oh, no! there was no need of any fall. Conscience would just as easily have sprung into conscious existence in glad self-approval of man had conquered. Sin is sin and fall is fall, even though valuable lessons are learned through the defilement.

And the race is still suffering the consequences of the fall. Not that God punishes us for what a man and woman did thousands of years ago. No. But that the evil thing has "got into our blood." Heredity has a powerful influence. We are a good deal the resultant of those who came before us. That is what we mean by original sin. And that is why we need so sorely the blessed promise of God, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

IV.

"A mere child-story," says somebody, "about a man and a woman and a tree and a talking serpent."

Yes, it is a child-story,—it was intended as a child-story for the child-races of the old world. I have been specially emphasizing that for you.

But, oh, was there ever another such marvellous child-story—such deep knowledge of the human heart, such close analysis of the nature of sin! Could anything but the play of the Holy Spirit on their souls have taught the old child-races to produce a parable such as that—a parable simple enough for the big children of the time, and yet deep enough for all after-ages of mental and spiritual growth. The child learns it in Sunday School and feels that it means much more than it says. The devout student of history and science reads it and feels that it gives the essential truths about the tragedy of human struggle. The sorrowful, repentant sinner reads it as he bows down ashamed before God, and he feels that this picture of the sin of primeval man is exactly the picture of his own sin. Just follow it with me.

"Now the serpent was more subtle than all the beasts of the field," etc. Don't you know how you have felt that after any sin. How you hated the cunning, crawling, serpent that could creep through any hole and treacherously coil himself around you.

Then you read how the woman looked and kept looking instead of fleeing from temptation—the looking led to longing. She saw that the forbidden fruit was pleasant to the eye and good for food, and a thing to be desired to make one wise. And the serpent said to the woman, "Hath God really said that you must not eat of it? Are you sure it is a sin? And then he grew bolder. 'Ye shall not surely die.' "And the woman took and did eat, and gave also to her husband and he did eat."

And as you read you know that that is exactly your own story.

And then immediately deep shame fell on them, "the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amid the trees of the garden." And the stern accusation of God met them, "What hast thou done?" And the man said, "It was not quite my fault. And the woman said, 'It was not quite my fault.'"

Is not that like your own story. When you had done the sin then came the deep shame and the hiding from God, and the feeling that you were naked and the effort to excuse yourself, and to put the blame on circumstances. And all the time you knew that God was after you. Alone in the midnight again and again came that stern voice ringing through your conscience, "What hast thou done. Hast thou eaten of the fruit whereof I commanded that thou shouldest not eat?"

And then the naked, shame-hunted creatures banished from Eden, and the toil and struggle, and the dead son, and the murderer flying from the face of man were God's silent answer to the devil's lie. "Thou shalt not surely die. Thou shalt not necessarily suffer for thy sin."

Does not that old child-story of the child-races of the world exactly describe your case? And if we are right in believing that those old legends of the Creation and the Fall were known to the old world men ages before the Book of Genesis was written,—does it not strike you as likely that God's Holy Spirit had to do with it, and that the fools who sneer at the old world child-story of the man and the woman and the talking serpent, and the nakedness—well that they are fools.

V.

There is one thought more before we close the chapter. It tells that when the man and woman had done the devil's bidding and grieved and disappointed God, when in the shame of their sin they no longer felt fit for God's eye and vainly tried to cover their nakedness with a few leaves, then the Lord God made a covering for them,—made them coats of skins and clothed them."

I wonder if that is intended to be part of the spiritual lesson. I should think it is, because it comes after the wonderful prophecy, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

Does it mean the loving mercy of God Who did not want His poor shamed hiding creatures to be shamed and hiding for ever, and so provided a covering for their nakedness? Does it mean that God would not leave them alone, that He must still watch over and care for and come down to suffer with these poor children of His whom He had created? That is true at any rate whether the story means to teach us or not. God cannot let us go, Christ cannot give us up in spite of our sins.

His voice still comes as we tramp on, With a sorrowful fall in its pleading tone, "Thou wilt tire in the dreary ways of sin, 'I left my home to bring thee in 'In its golden street are no weary feet; 'Is rest is pleasant, its songs are sweet, 'And we rush back angrily, hurrying on 'To a terrible home where rest is none, 'We want not your city's gilded street, nor to hear its constant song."

Yet still Christ keeps on loving us,
Loving all along.

The Churchwoman.

OTTAWA.

Ottawa.—St. John's.—The annual meeting of this Branch of the Woman's Auxiliary took place last week in St. John's Hall. The meeting was conducted by the Rev. Canon Pollard, and was a very interesting one, the reports showing satisfactory work done in all branches. The receipts for the year totalled \$155.74, and expenditure \$147.43. One bale was sent out and a number of scarfs knitted for the lepers. The officers appointed for the year are: Honorary President, Mrs. Pollard; President, Mrs. Cuzner; Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Capp, Mrs. Cope; Secretary, Mrs. W. D. Morris; Treasurer, Miss Grist; Dorcas Secretary, Miss Cushing; Leaflet Secretary, Miss Bloomfield; Literature Secretary, Mrs. Thompson; Box Secretary, Mrs. Johnson; Extra-cent-a-day Treasurer, Mrs. Code. The report of the Children's Branch was given and the following officers elected: President, Miss Florence Cushing; Treasurer, Miss O. Jones; Secretary, Miss Ellard; Superintendent, Mrs. Charles Hickman.

Mrs. Capp, president of the newly organized Girls' Auxiliary, gave the report for that Branch. On the conclusion of the business Mrs. Spencer Walton, of South Africa, gave a short address on "Missionary Work," and Canon Kittson also spoke, taking as his subject "The Greatness of Little Things."

Shoal Lake.—St. Paul's.—The Woman's Auxiliary of this parish had their Easter sales of useful and fancy articles on the Wednesday in Easter week, and considering the closeness of the money market, a good sum was realized, the ladies working heart and hand together to make it a success, and to encourage and cheer their President, Mrs. Wood, who, through illness, caused by an accident, was unable to be present. Many thanks are due to all the Woman's Auxiliary members for their help and generous support.

KOOTENAY.

Kaslo.—St. Mark's.—This is the third annual report of this Parochial Branch of the Woman's Auxiliary. "Dear Madam President, and Fellow Members of the Woman's Auxiliary,—At the end of our third year's work it is very delightful to be able to report progress, progress both financial and numerical, may God grant that in his sight our spiritual life may be one of real progression also, lest that while we are active in helping to raise money to send missionaries to heathen lands we ourselves might prove to be, in the immortal words of St. Paul, 'Cast-a-ways.' Since our last annual meeting nine regular monthly meetings have been held and six special meetings. Our Honorary President represented us at the March District Board meeting; our Honorary Secretary and Treasurer represented us at the annual meeting in May; our Honorary President in September, and our President in December, all of which meetings were held in Nelson. In June we were regretfully compelled to accept the resignation of our Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, the former office has since been vacant, and the latter has been coupled with that of Secretary; this disappointment was somewhat lessened by the increase of three new members, also in June, none of which, however, could be induced to accept office. In conjunction with the Ladies' Guild we have held three entertainments and sales during the past year: May day sale 1907, our annual sale in October 20th, 1907, and Shrove Tuesday social sale on March 3rd, 1908, all of which were very successful financially. We have paid our pledge of \$10 towards Miss Wade's salary; we have also sent \$5 to the Indian School at Metlakatla. We paid 90 cents affiliation fees for 1907. We also sent \$1, the amount of the collection at St. Andrew's, Day service to Nelson to be included in their Pan-Anglican Congress offering, and a small parcel of odds and ends of silk and velvet to Miss Riddell's Leper Home in Japan. We have also paid \$6 for the Synod assessment, while in our own parish we have paid the churchwardens a sum of \$25 to help at a deficit in the vicar's stipend, purely unavoidable by a monthly deficit of \$9.50, owing to removals and other causes. We also have paid \$20 to date for the heating and cleaning of the church for the past five months, and with the kind assistance of the Guild of \$10 we have been enabled to make the church much more comfortable by having cocoa-nut matting laid on the aisle, choir stalls, entrance from the vestry and organ recess. We have also, with the Guild, paid \$12 for tuning the old organ, our half being \$6, financially this means that we have paid \$67.45 to our home church, while we have only sent to missions (including our \$6 for Synod assessment) \$22.90, just about one-third of our net receipts, instead of one-half, which it was the original intention of our Branch to devote to missions, however, we must 'be just before being generous,' and it would not seem consistent Christianity to leave our churchwardens in debt while we sent money to help pay the salaries of outside missionaries. We start this year with fourteen members' names on our roll, instead of nine, as at the beginning of last year. 'The future we may face now, we have proved the past,' S. Helena Nash Keen, Honorary Secretary-Treasurer Woman's Auxiliary."

"Where wert thou, brother, those four days?"
There lives no record of reply,
Which, telling what it is to die,
Had surely added praise to praise."

Kindness is catching, and if you go around with a thoroughly developed case, your neighbours will be sure to get it. Be kind one to another.